Fort Pueblo

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By EDWARD BROADHEAD

Where the Fontaine-qui-bouille meets the Napesta a fort was built in May of 1842. The site was attractive to trappers because it was not many days journey to the beaver streams of the Rockies. Indian traders favored it because it was on the border line of the lands occupied by the Cheyennes and Arapahoes to the north and east and the mountain areas claimed by the Utes to the west. Although the general region was arid, there was an adequate and continuous flow of water from the mountains, the grasses were lush for grazing, and there was an ample supply of timber. The altitude was below 5,000 feet and more suitable for agriculture than most other areas round about.

The fort was not a military fort, nor was it built by a trading company. The funding came from a group of five individuals who were the first owners. The construction was adobe, skillfully made by Mexicans from Mora and Taos, New Mexico. Although this spot was not on the more direct routes of the Santa Fe trail, travelers often came this way to avoid the more desertlike areas on the Cimarron and the Timpas routes.

When El Pueblo was built in 1842 there were several other forts which the builders could have used as patterns. The most noted and very familiar to the builders was Bent's Fort 70 miles east on the Arkansas which had been built in 1832 by the Bent, St. Vrain Company. It had walls fourteen feet high and measured 137 by 178 feet with projecting bastions on two corners. There were four forts on the South Platte built in the 1830s: Fort Jackson, Fort Lupton, Fort Vasquez and Fort St. Vrain. The latter, built by the Bent, St. Vrain Company in 1837, measured 106 by 128 feet.

There are various descriptions of Fort Pueblo with greatly different dimensions. Thomas Fitzpatrick stated in 1847 that the walls were twelve feet high. George Ruxton in 1847 called it a small square fort with walls not over eight feet high. B.W. Bilby, who lived in Pueblo in 1863, said that the outline of the crumbled adobe walls was some fifty by sixty feet. Probably the last dimension is most nearly correct.

At any rate it was a plaza with adobe rooms on three sides of a courtyard. The side toward the river had a large wooden gateway with adobe at each side. The rooms all opened into a common courtyard and were not interconnected.

There were a kitchen, a blacksmith shop, an eating room, a trading room, storage rooms, and sleeping rooms. The main en-

trance opening a few feet from the river made it less easy for an enemy to attack. The fort was not built primarily for defense against the Indians. It was a trading post with quarters to protect the horses and stock from being stolen. The Indians at this period were not usually unfriendly to Americans. They were never eager to fight, but they were wont to steal anything they could take without too much trouble. So the fort did protect from theft. It is doubtful that Fort Pueblo ever had armed guards on duty at all times as did Bent's Fort where armed guards were always visible on the walls.

John Charles Fremont, Battalion Captain of Topographical Engineers, sent a report to Congress dated March 1, 1845, describing his second expedition to Oregon and North California in 1843 and 1845. On the route west he stopped at Fort Pueblo and recorded his experience as follows:

"Continuing down the river (the Fountain), we encamped at noon on the 14th at its mouth, on the Arkansas river. A short distance above our encampment, on the left bank of the Arkansas, is a pueblo, (as the Mexicans call their civilized Indian villages,) where a number of mountaineers, who had married Spanish women in the valley of the Taos, had collected together, and occupied themselves in farming, carrying on at the same time a desultory Indian trade. They were principally Americans, and treated us with all the rude hospitality their situation admitted; but as all commercial intercourse with New Mexico was now interrupted, in consequence of Mexican decrees to that effect, there was nothing to be had in the way of provisions. They had, however, a fine stock of cattle, and furnished us with an abundance of excellent milk. . . I had here the satisfaction to meet our good buffalo hunter of 1842, Christopher Carson, whose services I considered myself fortunate to secure again; and as a reinforcement of mules was absolutely necessary, I despatched him immediately, with an account of our necessities, to Mr. Charles Bent, whose principal post is on the Arkansas river, about 75 miles below Fontaine-qui-bouit. He was directed to proceed from that post by the nearest route across the country, and meet me with what animals he should be able to obtain at St. Vrain's fort."

In late June of the following year Fremont again passed through Pueblo. He had some interesting comments on the region just northwest of the fort as he came south. "During the day our road was fatiguing and difficult, reminding us much, by its steep and rocky character, of our travelling the year before among the Wind River mountains; but always at night we found some grassy bottom, which afforded us a pleasant camp. In the deep seclusion of these little streams, we found always an abundant pasturage, and a wild luxuriance of plants and trees. Aspens and pines were the prevailing timber; on the creeks, oak was frequent; but the narrow-leaved cottonwood (populus angustifolia,) of unusually large size, and seven or eight feet in circumference, was the principal tree. With these were mingled a variety of shubbery trees, which aided to make the

ravines almost impenetrable.

"After several days' laborious travelling, we succeeded in extricating ourselves from the mountains, and on the morning of the 28th encamped immediately at their foot, on a handsome tributary to the Arkansas river. In the afternoon we descended the stream, winding our way along the bottoms, which were densely wooded with oak, and in the evening encamped near the main river. Continuing the next day our road along the Arkansas, and meeting on the way a war party of Arapahoe Indians, we arrived before sunset at the Pueblo, near the mouth of the Fontaine-qui-bouit river, where we had the pleasure to find a number of our old acquaintances. The little settlement appeared in a thriving condition; and in the interval of our absence another had been established on the river, some thirty miles above." This was the Hardscrabble Plaza, built in early 1844 by Alexander Barclay, Joseph Doyle, George Simpson and others.

Two years later Francis Parkman had left St. Louis in the early spring to travel to Oregon and California. He spent several months in Wyoming with some friendly Indians and then, instead of heading for Oregon, he turned south just east of the mountains and reached Pueblo and Bent's Fort in August. They approached Pueblo moving south along the Fountain. "After an hour's ride we reached the edge of a hill, from which a welcome sight greeted us. The Arkansas ran along the valley below, among woods and groves, and closely nestled in the midst of wide cornfields and green meadows, where cattle were grazing, rose the low mud walls of the Pueblo.

"We approached the gate of the Pueblo. It was a wretched species of fort, of most primitive construction, being nothing more than a large square enclosure, surrounded by a wall of mud, miserably cracked and dilapidated. The slender pickets that surmounted it were half broken down, and the gate dangled on its wooden hinges so loosely that to open or shut it seemed likely to fling it down altogether. Two or three squalid Mexicans. . . disappeared as they saw us approach; and as we rode up to the gate, a light active figure came out to meet us. It was our old friend Richard. He had come from Fort Laramie on a trading expedition to Taos; but finding when he reached the Pueblo that the war would prevent his going farther, he was quietly waiting till the conquest of the country should allow him to proceed. He seemed to feel bound to do the honors of the place. Shaking us warmly by the hand, he led the way into the area.

"Here we saw his large Santa Fe wagons standing together. A few squaws and Spanish women, and a few Mexicans, as mean and miserable as the place itself, were lazily sauntering about. Richard conducted us to the state apartment of the Pueblo, a small mud room, very neatly finished, considering the material, and garnished with a crucifix, a looking-glass, a picture of the Virgin, and a rusty horse pistol. There were no chairs, but instead of them a number of

chests and boxes ranged about the room. There was another room beyond, less sumptuously decorated, and here three or four Spanish girls, one of them very pretty, were baking cakes at a mud fireplace in the corner. They brought out a poncho, which they spread upon the floor by way of tablecloth. A supper, which seemed to us luxurious, was soon laid out upon it, and folded buffalo robes were placed around it to receive the guests. Two or three Americans besides ourselves were present. We sat down in Turkish fashion, and began to ask the news. . .

"When we took leave of Richard it was near sunset. Passing out of the gate, we could look down the little valley of the Arkansas; a beautiful scene, and doubly so to our eyes, so long accustomed to deserts and mountains. Tall woods lined the river, with green meadows on either hand; and high bluffs, quietly basking in the sunlight, flanked the narrow valley. A Mexican on horseback was driving a herd of cattle towards the gate, and our little white tent, which the men had pitched under a tree in the meadow, made a pleasing feature in the scene. When we reached it, we found that Richard had sent a Mexican to bring us an abundant supply of green corn and vegetables, and to invite us to help ourselves to whatever we wanted from the fields around the Pueblo.

"The inhabitants were in daily apprehension of an inroad from more formidable consumers than we. Every year, at the time when the corn beings to ripen, the Arapahoes, to the number of several thousands, come and encamp around the Pueblo. The handful of white men, who were entirely at the mercy of this swarm of barbarians, choose to make a merit of necessity; they come forward very cordially, shake them by the hand, and tell them that the harvest is entirely at their disposal. The Arapahoes take them at their word, help themselves most liberally, and usually turn their horses into the cornfields afterwards. They have the foresight, however, to leave enough of the crops untouched to serve as an inducement for planting the fields again for their benefit in the next spring."

Although the five men who first built Fort Pueblo were well-off financially, there was not one of them who could afford to build a fort on his own. The obvious purpose in building was to set up a central point from which the individual traders could operate on their own with the hope of making a fortune. Fort Bent and Fort Laramie were shining examples of forts through which passed hundreds of thousands of dollars each year. By joining together they hoped to be able to attract a bigger business than any one might do alone. Yet they did not become partners but each worked for himself from the home base of Fort Pueblo. Who were these first investors? Tracing the origins of each one proves fascinating.

Matthew Kinkead

Matthew Kinkead was the son of David Kinkead and was born in Madison County, Kentucky. The family moved around frequently until it settled in Boonslick, Missouri, shortly before the War of 1812. Matthew, born in 1795, first went west about 1824, possibly to Santa Fe as a trader. We know that he made a trip to Santa Fe in 1825 and went north to Taos where he became associated with William Workman in starting a distillery. In 1826-7 he took into his home a seventeen-year-old lad from Franklin, Missouri, by the name of Christoper Carson. Carson had run away from home where he was apprenticed to a brother of Workman. In 1829 Kinkead became a Mexican citizen in order to further his financial business.

In 1835 Matthew Kinkead and 75 other men received grants of land in the Mora valley from the Mexican governor of New Mexico. The purpose was to encourage the settlement of the vast lands east of the mountains to protect the Mexican claim from the Americans. Edmond (Francisco) Conn was a friend of Kinkead and also received a grant in Mora. At Mora Kinkead came to know a neighbor, Manuel Suaso, who also came from Taos with his wife Teresita and their four children. One of the enterprises at Mora was sheep raising. Kinkead developed a large flock, probably as a partner with Conn.

By 1841 Kinkead became involved with Teresita and she bore him a son, Andres. Andres was baptized with the name of Suaso but soon all the neighbors came to know that he was Kinkead's son. Teresita took her children and moved in with Kinkead. The social pressure and the resentment against Americans in Mora were upsetting Kinkead so he sent his flock of sheep by Richens Wootton, aged 25, to Missouri to be sold and he took Teresita and the children and moved to the Arkansas at the mouth of the Fountain. When Wootton returned from Missouri, he brought a herd of cows with which Kinkead established the first cattle ranch in present day Colorado. He used the cattle not only for milk but to suckle buffalo calves which he and Teresita captured on the plains. These calves were raised along the Arkansas about the spot where the Goodnight barn was later located. The sale for the buffalo was not very good in the East and Kinkead gave up the project and moved his cattle to the upper Hardscrabble in 1843. Wootton wrote his memoirs later and claimed that the buffalo farm was his.

In the meantime in 1842 Kinkead and Conn met with George Simpson, Robert Fisher and Joseph Mantz to plan and build Fort Pueblo. This was done with the assistance of many Mexicans from Taos and Mora who made the adobe bricks for the fort.

When Kinkead took his cattle to his new ranch at the mouth of the Hardscrabble Canyon, he hired several former trappers and traders: Maurice LeDuc, Calvin Briggs, John Burroughs, Tom Wells. The ranch was prosperous but Kinkead lost Teresita to Alex-

ander Barclay, who joined Joseph Doyle and George Simpson in building a new settlement on the lower Hardscrabble about six miles from Kinkead. In 1847 Kinkead left the ranch and, taking his son, Andres, with him set out for California where he eventually owned several haciendas and some sailing ships. He died near Sacramento, very rich.

Edmond 'Francisco' Conn

Edmond Conn was born in Missouri in 1800 and joined Kinkead in 1830 in Taos. He was baptised as Francisco Conn in 1834 and became a Mexican citizen. He also received a grant in Mora in 1834 and became a partner of Kinkead. They moved to Pueblo together in 1841 where he became a partner in the buffalo raising project. When they gave up the buffaloes, Conn moved to the Hardscrabble with Kinkead in December 1843. Conn became a trader going to Fort Laramie with goods from Taos in 1846. The last information we have of Conn is when he traded at the Greenhorn store about the time that Kinkead headed for California.

John Gantt

John Gantt (1790-1849) joined the Army in Kentucky in 1817. On May 12, 1829, he was courtmartialed for falsifying some pay accounts. He became a trader and a partner of Jefferson Blackwell. After buying some mules in Taos they took them to the mouth of the Laramie to trade them to emigrants on the Oregon Trail. In 1833 they built a picket post on the Arkansas and six miles downstream from the mouth of the Fountain. Since business was good they built an adobe fort the next year. This was sometimes known as Fort Cass and was only three miles above a picket post of the Bents. On July 29, 1834, William Bent attacked the Shoshonis and defeated them within sight of Gantt's Fort. His failure to defend his customers made Gantt lose face with the Indians and his trade declined. But Gantt's Fort, although unoccupied, was used as a way station for travelers for many years. Alexander Barclay several times mentioned in his diary in the late 1840s that he spent the night at Gantt's Fort when he was on the way to Bent's Fort.

Robert Fisher

Robert Fisher was born in Virginia in 1807 and came to Santa Fe as early as 1824. He was baptised in Taos in 1831. In 1834 he was with William Bent and his party which attacked the Shoshonis on the Arkansas just east of Gantt's Fort.

Fisher worked for the Bents for many years. In 1839 he traveled to Fort Laramie where he met George Simpson. Both young men fell under the spell of Old Bill Williams, an old time trapper, a retired preacher who followed a rather wild type of life even for those times. The boys both went trapping with Old Bill in Utah and Nevada. Robert Fisher and George Simpson came to the Pueblo area in time to work with Kinkead and Conn in building Fort Pueblo. Fisher went to Taos some time in 1842 and was married to Maria Rumalda Lopez of Abiquiu. They had five children.

In 1845 Fisher went with John Hatcher to build Bent's Adobe Walls fort on the Canadian River in the present Texas Panhandle to attract the trade of the Comanches. When Charles Bent, the first American governor of New Mexico, was assassinated in Taos in 1847, Fisher went to Taos for the trial of the assassins. He served as foreman of one of the three petit juries set up to try the rebels. On November 29, 1847, Fisher was again in Pueblo. The followig April he accompanied Alexander Barclay and Ceran St. Vrain to Taos. Following the Ute attack on Lucien Maxwell's party at Manco Burro Pass, Fisher and Old Bill Williams were sent as scouts to locate and punish the Utes. In October 1848 the Bents tried to reopen the fort at Adobe Walls which had not succeeded because of Indian opposition. Fisher was with this party which was under the direction of Kit Carson. This plan failed also.

In 1849 on August 10 William Bent finally dismissed Fisher in preparation for the abandonment of his great fort on the Arkansas. Fisher was with Kit Carson, Wootton and Leroux when they attempted to rescue Mrs. White and her child who had been seized by the Jicarillo Apaches. When they came upon the Indians, Kit Carson recommended an immediate attack to catch the Indians off guard. The military officer in charge instead called for a parley. This gave the Indians time to kill Mrs. White. The child was never heard from again. The Jicarillo Apaches then attacked Carson's ranch at Rayado, New Mexico, in 1850. In April 1850 Fisher sold his house in Taos and moved to Rayado. Later in that year he went to California with George Simpson in search of gold. He died there in 1852. Beulah was first called Fisher's Hole, then Mace's Hole before it was named Beulah.

George Semmes Simpson

George Semmes Simpson, 1818-1885, was born in St. Louis, the son of Dr. Robert Simpson and Bricia Smith. The doctor was also a druggist and had interests in banking and in the mercantile business. The family was very well to do. George was the fourth child of seven, but the first one to survive infancy, which may ac-

count for the extent to which his parents spoiled him. George had an excellent education but seemed quite unable to settle down to any steady occupation. Without his parents' consent he left home for the mountains in 1838. He went trapping with Old Bill Williams on the Snake River and in Nevada. They met a party of trappers which included Jim Beckwourth, Tim Goodale, Maurice LeDuc with his Shoshoni squaw and their two children, all of whom they would know later at Fort Pueblo. The following June, George was at the great rendezvous on Horse Creek near the Green River. after this event, he joined Mark Head, Jimmy Daugherty (for whom Jimmy's Camp was named after Jimmy was killed there near Colorado Springs), Cut Rock Brown, Robert Fisher and Louis Ambroise and they trapped in Western Colorado, Utah, and Nevada on the Humboldt. By late 1840 he returned to St. Louis to see his parents. The boredom of not traveling made him restless and he soon left to join the Bidwell-Bartleson party heading for California. When they reached Fort Laramie, George left the party with Robert Fisher and they turned south to Bent's Fort. The two of them must have dreamed up something about a fort at the mouth of the Fountain, for George wrote to his family and asked them to send him a stock of goods to trade with the Indians.

George Simpson, Robert Fisher, Matthew Kinkead, Francisco Conn and Joseph Mantz pooled their resources and started building the fort in May 1842. It must have been fairly well completed by the end of September, for Rufus Sage noted in his report that he saw the fort on September 21 and that it had been built during the past summer. Few of the owners stayed at the fort for very long. Joseph Mantz is not mentioned again and presumably left the fort soon after it was built.

Kinkead and Conn had moved to the ranch on the upper Hardscrabble by the end of 1843. In the same year Robert Fisher sold his interest in the fort to Robert Spaulding. For a short time the fort was called Fort Spaulding. George Simpson was the only one who retained his share of the fort for any length of time. He is said to have kept his share until 1867, although this seems questionable.

There were many others at the Pueblo in 1842 or within the next few years who made the spot their headquarters. It is difficult to ascertain the residence of many of the trappers and traders because they were all on the road or out hunting more than they stayed at home. Some of the early residents follow.

Archibald Metcalf

Archibald Metcalf was born in New York state in 1815. He went to St. Louis in 1840 and left with John Baptiste Richard on a trading expedition to the West. The next year he went to settle on the

Greenhorn where he joined John Brown, who had a store there for several years, and William New and Marcelino Baca. These men all saw the building of Fort Pueblo in 1842. Metcalf took liquor from Pueblo to the North Platte near Fort Laramie but was not too successful in selling to the Sioux. He moved to the South Platte and sold his goods to Lancaster Lupton, in turn working for Lupton until his fort was closed in 1844. Metcalf then came to Pueblo. He was married to a 15-year-old, Maria de la Luz Trujillo, in Taos in 1845 and they settled in Pueblo. Luz was at Bent's Fort when Kearny arrived there in August 1845.

In January 1847 following the Taos rebellion Metcalf was placed second in command under Ceran St. Vrain when they recaptured Taos. He then became for a short time the sheriff of Taos at the time of the trials of the rebels. The next April he set out to trade with the Utes. By October he returned to Pueblo and bought Alexander Barclay's store, and in November he bought "the houses" of Barclay and Doyle. In partnership with Doyle he traded with the Cheyennes and the Sioux on the Platte. He was at John Brown's store on the Greenhorn on February 12, 1848. He set out with Brown, his wife and child to go to Taos. Just south of Greenhorn they were attacked by a party of Apaches and they returned safely to Greenhorn. In the summer Metcalf moved to Santa Fe with Luz. In 1849 he went to Dodge to trade with the Kiowas, working out of Fort Barclay in New Mexico. In July he returned to the Arkansas. Metcalf, Carson and Calvin Jones went to an upper crossing of the North Platte to build a bridge near Fort Laramie.

We hear no more about Metcalf. There was a cholera epidemic at Fort Laramie that summer. Did Metcalf succumb? The constant moving from one spot to another, changing jobs frequently, sudden success and then often abject failure in quick succession was typical of people in the 1840's.

Marcelino Baca

Marcelino Baca was born in Taos in 1808. He spent nine years on the upper Missouri and was called the best trapper in the mountains and the first in a fight. He was strikingly handsome, over six feet tall. In 1838 he was taken captive by the Pawnees and was prepared for a ritual sacrifice. The chief's daughter begged her father for his life. The chief consented and they were married. He called her Tomasa and she gave him three children: Jose, born on the South Platte in 1839; Luis, born at Fort Laramie in 1841, and Elena, born at Hardscrabble in 1846. Elena later became the wife of Mariano Autobees, oldest son of Charles Autobees. Baca lived at Pueblo and

Greenhorn until the Massacre at Fort Pueblo in 1854. When Baca's house on the Fountain across from the Fort was attacked, the Indians did not try to kill Baca. Although Baca and 90-year-old Jose Barela held off the Utes, Baca lost 500 head of cattle, 13 horses, two mules and 117 fanegas of corn. He was financially ruined. Baca took his family to New Mexico. He was killed in the battle of Valverde on February 21, 1862.

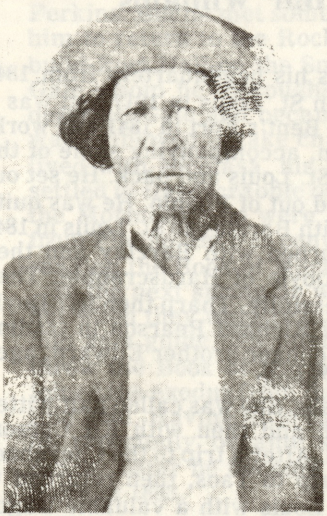
Simeon Turley

Simeon Turley was born in 1806 in Kentucky and was brought up in Boonslick, Missouri, where he knew the young Kit Carson, Matthew Kinkead, William Workman and others who eventually turned up at Pueblo. Turley built a distillery and flour mill at Arroyo Hondo sometime after 1830. In 1836 he hired Charles Autobees to take the flour and whiskey to market on the Arkansas and the South Platte. When the Fort at Pueblo was built Turley kept a store there with Autobees to operate it.

Charles Autobees

Charles Autobees was born in St. Louis in 1812, the son of Francois Autobees. The name was a corruption of a French name Urtebise or Ortivis. His father died in 1815 and his mother married Bartholomew Tobin. Their son, Tom Tobin, later well known in Pueblo, was a half brother of Autobees. In 1836 Charles went to Taos where he met Simeon Turley and worked for him in nearby Arroyo Hondo until Turley sent him to run the store in Pueblo in 1842. Charles was out of a job when Turley was assassinated in 1847 at the time of the Taos uprising. Charles married the widow Serafina Avila at Taos. They had three children: Mariano, born in 1837; Jose Thomas, born in 1842, and Francequita. It is said that Charles had seven wives, sometimes several at a time. His third wife, Sycamore, an Arapahoe, bore him several children. Estefana, a Navajo, gave him three children. The only children recognized in his will were the children of his first wife, Serafina.

In 1847 Autobees had a farm on the Red River in New Mexico where he stayed until St. Vrain sent him to the Huerfano in 1853. This was the first farm on the Huerfano and was used by St. Vrain to confirm his Mexican land grant of 1844 from Mexican Governor Armijo. Autobees farmed this land until his death in 1882.



Charles Autobees

George S. Simpson

William New

William New lived at Fort Pueblo in 1842 although he was not one of the builders. He was born in Illinois in 1802, worked at Bent's Fort in 1836. He was sent to trade with the Arapahoes in the Fountain Valley, then was shifted to the South Platte where the Bents put him in charge of Fort St. Vrain on February 6, 1837. In the fall of the year Marcellin St. Vrain, a younger brother of Ceran, was given charge of Fort St. Vrain. New left the Bents and trapped for several years. He was at the great summer rendezvous of 1837, 1838 and 1839. He got into trouble stealing horses at Fort Hall, also from the Snake Indians, and then in California. He returned to Bent's Fort in September 1841. The next year he again visited Barclay at Fort Barclay in New Mexico. In 1850 he built a cabin at Rayado near Kit Carson. He was listed in the census of 1850 as a farmer with his wife Mary and three children. In 1851 he was killed by the Jicarilla Apaches at his home in Rayado.

The Tharp brothers— 'Old Bill' Williams

William Tharp used Fort Pueblo as his headquarters from 1844 until his death in 1847. He was born in St. Louis in 1817 and was a cousin of Ceran St. Vrain. He came to Bent's Fort in 1841 and worked for the company of Bent, St. Vrain, accompanying some of the wagon trains with company goods to St. Louis and back. He set out to trade on his own in 1844 and worked out of Pueblo. He was quite successful, so much so that he went with Barclay to St. Louis in 1845 with six wagons of his own. He returned with Barclay and then formed a partnership with Joseph Doyle of Hardscrabble. They traded on the South Platte very successfully. Tharp then left Doyle and joined with Albert G. Boone and Richard Pearson in trading with the Cheyennes. In July 1846 his younger brother Edward, aged 22, joined William and his family in Pueblo.

William married Antonia Luna of Taos. She was called half-witted and had lived with Jim Beckwourth and then with Kit Carson. William and Antonia had two children. After a trip to the Cheyennes in January 1847, he made a quick trip to Taos, then returned to Pueblo and set out on May 5 for St. Louis with a valuable wagon train of his own. On the route he was killed by the Indians at Walnut Creek. Back in Pueblo brother Edward got into a brawl with James Waters and was killed. The older brother Louis came to Pueblo to settle affairs and to take over William's store. After being robbed by Indians Louis left Pueblo on February 25, 1848, for St. Louis, never to return.

Old Bill Williams was in and out of Pueblo frequently. In the spring of 1844 he stopped in Pueblo on his way north to Klamath Lake, Oregon. When he returned in August the same year he met Fremont who hired him to be a guide along with Kit Carson on a trip to the Great Salt Lake. Williams was in Pueblo when Fremont again asked him to guide him across the mountains in the winter. He agreed, against the advice of Kit Carson. The expedition ran into trouble because of the severe winter. Williams advised returning to Pueblo but Fremont ignored his advice and lost most of his men and supplies. The expedition was a disaster.

'Rube' Herring

Valentine Johnson (Rube) Herring was born in Illinois in 1812. When he was in St. Louis in 1831 he was hired by John Gantt to trap along the Platte. They moved south to the Arkansas near the future site of Pueblo and built a picket post to trade with the Arapahoes. Gantt was driven out of the competition by the Bents and Herring joined William Sublette on the upper Missouri in 1833. He was back

in St. Louis in 1834 where he narrowly missed marrying Seline Perkins. But he met some of his trapper friends and they persuaded him to return to the Rockies. He was hired by Nathaniel Wyeth to build Fort Hall on the Snake River. In 1835 he hunted with Joseph Gale whom he thoroughly disliked very soon. He and four others deserted Gale and became free trappers. It was in 1841-42 that he was employed to take charge of Fort Lancaster (Lupton). Here he lived with Nicolasa, his Mexican wife. In 1845 Rube and Nicolasa settled in Hardscrabble but were frequently in Pueblo. There he met the Mormons who were spending the winter across the Arkansas from Pueblo. He was converted to Mormonism and spent much time reading the Book of Mormon in a loud voice at the Fort.

In the next spring he was to lead the Mormons to Salt Lake City but when they were ready to leave, they told him they did not need him as a guide. His interest in Mormonism waned rapidly and he threw the Book of Mormon into the Arkansas. In June 1849 Rube joined the exodus from the Arkansas region in a trek to California to find gold. Having little fortune, he settled in San Bernardino where he reportedly became superintendent of schools and justice of peace. Later he became sheriff, county clerk and justice. He died there in 1883.

Charles Town—James Wesley Waters

Charles Town was a trader who was present in Pueblo at the establishment of the Fort. He was born in St. Louis but came west as a young man. He made a trip from Bent's Fort to Taos with Jim Beckwourth in 1841. He went with Fremont from Pueblo to California in 1843 and returned to Pueblo with Kit Carson and Alexis Godey where he arrived on July 1, 1844. On March 6, 1845, Town was married to Maria Antonia Montano in Taos by Padre Martinez. When the rebellion took place in Taos in January 1846, Town escaped when Charles Bent was assassinated. In April he served as a juror in the trial of the rebels. In June 1848 he was traveling from Pueblo to Taos with a party under Lucien Maxwell when the group was ambushed by the Apaches on Manco Burro Pass. Charles Town was one of those who lost his life.

Another original settler of Fort Pueblo in 1842 was James Wesley Waters. He was born in upper New York State in 1813 and went west to hunt and trap in 1835. At various times he worked with Kit Carson, Jim Bridger, Rube Herring and Old Bill Williams. In 1844 he made a trip to California and returned with abalone shells to trade with the Indians for beaver skins and buffalo robes. On February 2, 1848, Waters killed his friend Edward Tharp in a quarrel over Water's wife, Candelaria. For a time he hid out along the Fountain where his friends brought him food. He was never turned over to the law;

there was none in Pueblo at the time. The frontier punishment for murder was banishment and Waters went to Greenhorn to work for John Brown. The next year he set out with Brown, Calvin Briggs and John Burroughs and partyfor the gold ofCalifornia. They reached Sutter's Fort on September 15, 1849. Along with Godey and Brown, they opened a hotel and livery stable in San Juan Bautista. In 1856 Waters moved to San Bernardino where he married an English woman. The following year he bought the Yucaipo ranch and settled down. He died on September 20, 1889, at San Bernardino.

Richens Lacy Wootton

One of the lifetime personalities around early Pueblo was Richens Lacy Wootton, born on May 6, 1816, in Mecklenburg County, Virginia. His father was a well-to-do tobacco planter and Dick had a good business education. The family moved to Kentucky in 1823 and when Dick was eighteen he joined an uncle on a cotton plantation in Mississippi. Not liking that business very well, he went to Independence, Missouri, and in 1836 joined a Bent wagon train. He traveled north to trade with the Sioux near Fort Laramie on the North Platte. The next year he made a quick trip to Taos with St. Vrain. In the fall of 1838 nineteen trappers including Wootton went up the Arkansas, north up the Green River, over the Wind River Range, down the Big Horn to the Yellowstone, to the Salmon, Snake and Columbia rivers and to Fort Vancouver where they sold furs to Hudson's Bay company. Next they went south to Los Angeles and on the way back to Colorado trapped on the Gila and Colorado rivers before returning to Bent's Fort. Dick then spent two years as a hunter for Bent's Fort. In 1842 he drove some sheep to Missouri for Kinkead and in his memoirs claimed to have run the buffalo farm which he operated for Kinkead. He ran a weekly express between Bent's Fort and Fort St. Vrain on the South Platte. He was in Pueblo in January 1847 when John Albert brought the news of the Taos massacre and the death of Charles Bent. Wootton and four others set out for Taos to keep watch from the mountains until St. Vrain appeared with sixty volunteers to put down the rebellion on February 3, 1847. Colonel Doniphan sent for Wottoon to guide his troops west. He met them south of El Paso and was present at the battle of Sacramento near Chihuahua. Wootton was the one sent back to Albuquerque with news of the victory.

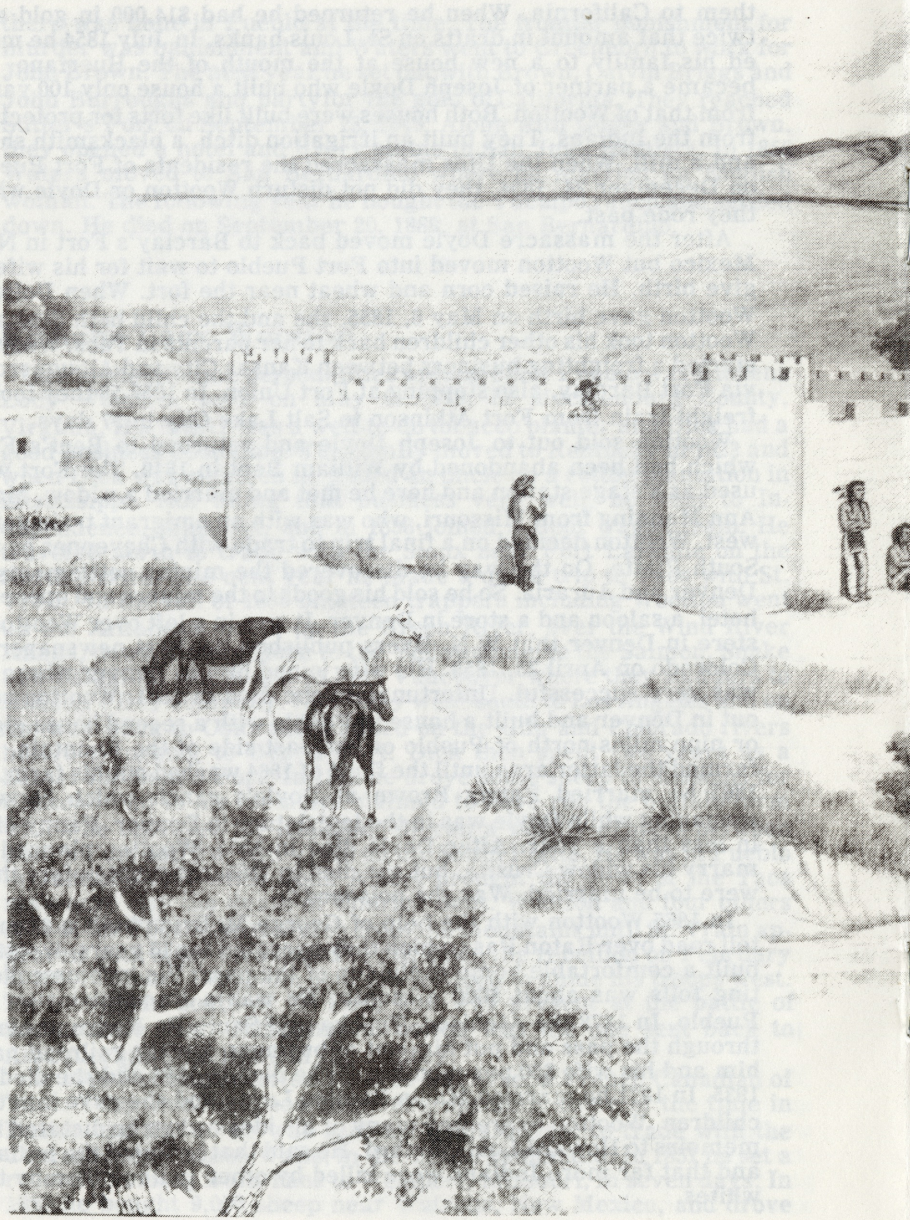
In 1848 Wootton married Dolores LaFevre, a French Canadian of Taos. They lived in Taos until 1854, spending some of the time in Pueblo. In 1849-50 he was sent by William Bent to trade with the Comanches at Adobe Walls, in the Texas panhandle. In 1851 he set a record by riding from Taos to Westport, Missouri, in seven days. In 1852 he bought 9,000 sheep near Watrous, New Mexico, and drove

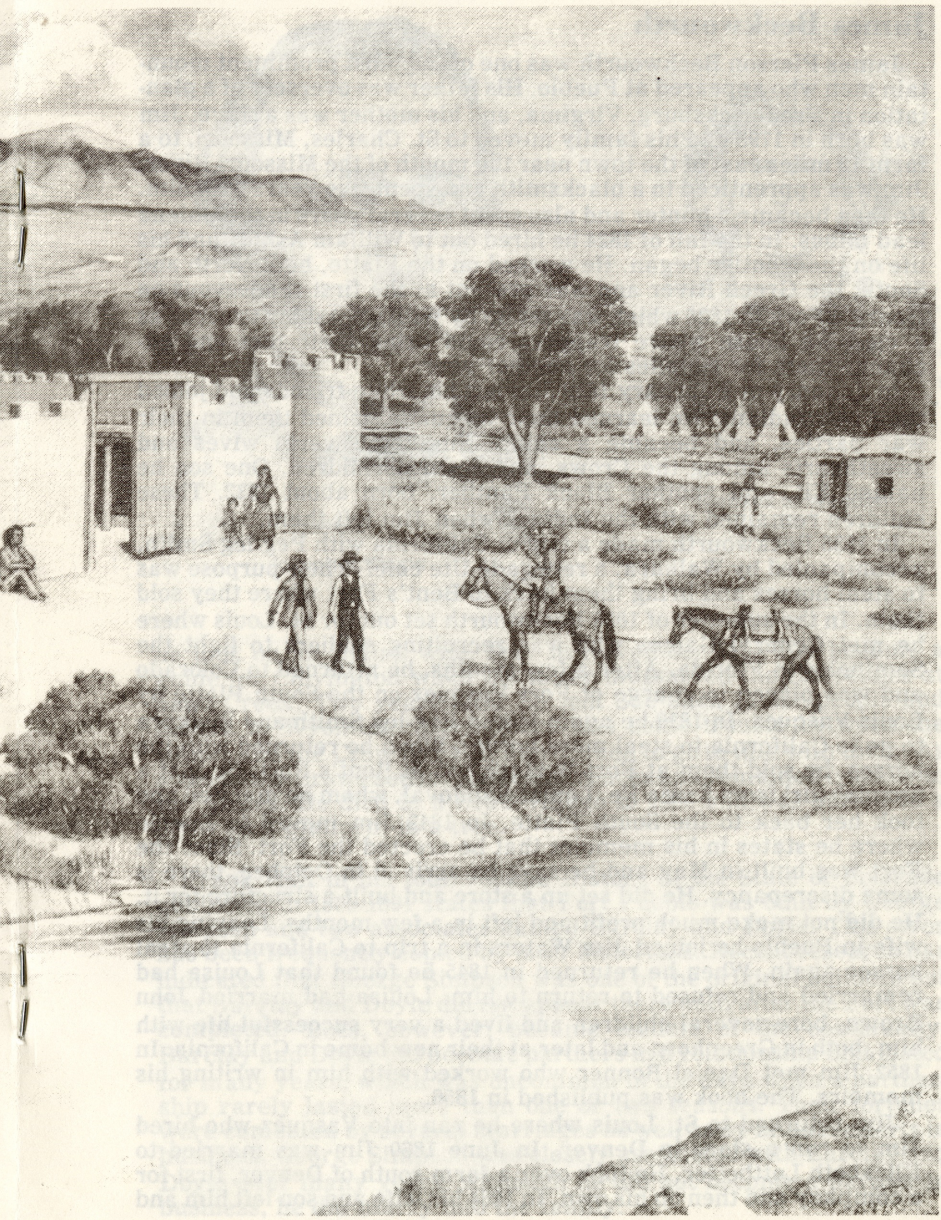
them to California. When he returned he had $14,000 in gold and twice that amount in drafts on St. Louis banks. In July 1854 he moved his family to a new house at the mouth of the Huerfano. He became a partner of Joseph Doyle who built a house only 100 yards from that of Wootton. Both houses were built like forts for protection from the Indians. They built an irrigation ditch, a blacksmith shop, and a mill. When the Utes massacred the residents of Fort Pueblo on December 24, 1854, they did not disturb Wootton or Doyle when they rode past.

After the massacre Doyle moved back to Barclay's Fort in New Mexico but Wootton moved into Fort Pueblo to wait for his wife to give birth. He raised corn and wheat near the fort. When Dolores Wootton gave birth on May 6, 1855, she and the child both died and Wootton took his other children back to her parents in Taos. Wootton started a freighting business between Kansas City and Albuquerque via Fort Barclay, also stopping at Fort Union. In 1857-58 they took a freight train from Fort Atkinson to Salt Lake City in 97 days.

Wootton sold out to Joseph Doyle and returned to Bent's Fort which had been abandoned by William Bent in 1849. The Fort was used as a stage station and here he met and married a widow, Mary Ann Manning from Missouri, who was with an emigrant train going west. Wootton decided on a final trip to trade with Cheyennes on the South Platte. On the way he discovered the mining settlements of Denver and Auraria. So he sold his goods to the miners and opened a hotel, a saloon and a store in Denver. It was in a loft over Wootton's store in Denver that W.N. Byers published the first newspaper in Colorado on April 23, 1859. His wife joined him in Denver where he was very successful. Unfortunately she died in 1861. Wootton sold out in Denver and built a house in Pueblo with a second house eight or nine miles north of Pueblo on the east side of the Fountain. He farmed the latter area until the flood of 1864 washed out his farm. In 1863 he married Fanny Brown at Doyle's ranch which he was managing while Doyle was in the legislature in Denver. Fanny died in less than a year. After Doyle died in 1864, Wootton planned to marry his widow Cruzita, but she died in 1865, the night before they were to be married. Was she poisoned?

In 1865 Wootton with the help of George McBride built a 27-mile toll road over Raton Pass which they operated for 13 years. Wootton built a comfortable home at the top of the pass. His income collecting tolls was about $600 a month. He was a frequent visitor to Pueblo. In 1878 the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad came through the pass and put him out of business, but the railroad paid him and his wife $50 per month until he died in 1888 and she died in 1935. In 1871 he married Maria Pauline Lujan and she gave him ten children. Wootton expressed many of his ideas when he dictated his memoirs to Howard Louis Conard. He said that he hated the Indians and that far more Indians were killed by other Indians than by the whites.





From a painting by Jolan Truan

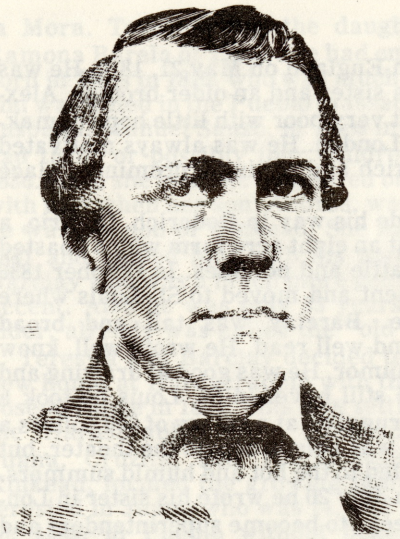
James Beckwourth

James Pierson Beckwourth was one of the most prominent mountain men who appeared at Pueblo. His father was overseer of a plantation in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and his mother was a slave. Jim was born in 1798 and his family moved to St. Charles, Missouri, to a farm 12 miles east of the town near the mouth of the Missouri River. Jim was apprenticed to a blacksmith and spent five years with him. He then became a hunter and also spent several years in the Galena lead mines. In the fall of 1824 he hired out to William Ashley and his life on the frontier began. He worked on the Platte, both North and South, the Green River and was present at the first rendezvous on Henry's Fork in 1825 which was set up by William Ashley to serve as a clearing house where trappers could bring their furs and exchange them for supplies for another year.

In January or February 1829 Jim left his white friends and joined the Crow Indians. He learned their language, joined them in their war parties, and became a chief. Jim had several wives and sweethearts among the Crows, and several children. One son he named Kit, and another Black Panther, born about 1832. These children remained with the Indians when Jim left them.

In 1835 Beckwourth made a trip to California with Peg-leg Smith, accompanied by Walkara, a renegade Ute chief. Their purpose was to steal horses and bring them back to Bent's Fort where they sold them. In the summer of 1836 Beckwourth set out for St. Louis where he met General Gaines who was recruiting soldiers to fight the Seminoles in Florida. After a few months, he returned to Colorado and was placed in charge of Fort Vasquez on the South Platte by Louis Vasquez. In 1839 he again joined Peg-leg Smith and Walkara to go to California to steal more horses. When he returned with the horses, he sold them at Fort Bridger and at Bent's Fort. He met a Spanish girl from Santa Fe, Louisa Sandoval, whom he married and took her back to the South Platte. In 1842 Jim moved to Pueblo where he states in his memoirs that he erected the Fort. Since the Fort was built in May and he says he arrived in October, there is some discrepancy. He did set up a store and built a structure for it. He did not make much profit and left in a few months. Leaving his wife in Pueblo he joined Jim Waters in a trip to California to steal horses again. When he returned in 1845 he found that Louisa had remarried and refused to return to him. Louisa had married John Brown, bore several children and lived a very successful life with him, both in Greenhorn and later at their new home in California. In 1852 Jim met Daniel Bonner who worked with him in writing his memoirs. The book was published in 1856.

Jim returned to St. Louis where he ran into Vasquez who hired Jim to run a store in Denver. In June 1860 Jim was married to Elizabeth Lettbetter. He took over a farm south of Denver, first for a company and then on his own. In 1864 his wife and son left him and



Joseph B. Doyle

Richens L. Wootton

he took on an Indian wife, Sue. In November 1864 Jim became a guide for Chivington when the latter massacred the Cheyennes at Sand Creek. Two years later he sent Sue back to her people and moved to Wyoming. When there was some trouble between the whites and the Crow Indians, Jim agreed to go to talk with them. As a result the Crows settled their differences and remained friendly to the whites. He died in a Crow village in 1866 and was buried as a Crow on a platform in a tree.

Frank Hall in his four volume History of the State of Colorado published in 1889-1894 states that Fort Pueblo was built by George Simpson and two associates named Barclay and Doyle. This error has been frequently copied by later historians. Recent research has indicated that George Simpson was one of the original builders but that Barclay and Doyle did not appear there until after the Fort was completed. Both, however, became leaders of the community. Barclay and Doyle did become partners in a relationship that lasted for many years, which was uncommon in the days when a partnership rarely lasted more than one or two seasons. Their fortunes were cemented by several marriages as well as by mutual efforts in business. George Simpson was closely associated with Barclay and Doyle over many years. Although he did not become a partner in business, he did marry into the family.

Alexander Barclay

Alexander Barclay was born in England on May 21, 1810. He was raised by his mother along with a sister and an older brother. Alexander was very well educated but very poor with little hope of making a better place for himself in London. He was always motivated by the expectation of becoming rich and having a prominent place in his community.

He left London in 1833 and made his way to Goderich, Ontario, a place near Lake Huron. He bought an eight acre farm which boasted a windowless cabin. He raised cattle and potatoes. In October 1836 he sold his farm in discouragement and moved to St. Louis where some of his friends had gone. Barclay was tall and broad shouldered, strong, intellegent and well read. He wrote well, knew his manners, yet with a sense of humor. He was good at drawing and water colors, a few of which we still have. In St. Louis he took a bookkeeper's job with a firm of druggists at a salary of 600 dollars a year. He rented a good room and was able to attend the theater, but still felt restless which he attributed to the hot and humid summers. So in May 1838 he quit his job. On July 20 he wrote his sister in London that he was leaving in two weeks to become superintendent and bookkeeper at Bent's Fort for two years. He stayed for four years. He regretted that there would be letters to and from England only about once a year. His salary was 650 dollars a year plus maintenance and quarters. The only objects he needed to buy were his clothing. There was very little on which to spend money.

Barclay spent his time learning about the many Indian tribes, meeting the trappers and traders who came by the fort, and probably wondering at the immense fortunes which went through his hands constantly. After four years at Bent's Fort Barclay went to St. Louis, bought a wagon, mules and a cargo of trade goods and set out up the Missouri. He reached Fort Platte, then started south heading for Bent's Fort 150 miles to the south. On this trip he probably stopped at the new Fort Pueblo where he ran into some old friends: Wootton, Doyle, Simpson and Kinkead, all of whom he had known at Bent's Fort. He continued on to St. Louis but probably as the result of some interesting ideas talked over at Pueblo, he returned there in the fall of 1843.

One of the attractions was a young woman of 32 whom he had first seen coming up from the river with a tub of laundry on her head. This scene he later recorded in a water color picture as he first remembered her. Teresita was "pretty as a peach", intelligent and hard working, and strong willed. To her Barclay was a polished English gentleman with gracious manners, and a good provider. The only problem was that Teresita was already married to Matthew Kinkaid. However, Teresita did not find that a problem since she had faced it once before when she left her husband for Kinkead

in Mora. Teresita was the daughter of Gervasio Sandoval and Ramona Barela of Taos. She had one brother, Jose Benito Sandoval, born in Taos in 1813, who was much later employed by Joseph Doyle and was killed in the Pueblo massacre in 1854. Teresita took her first husband, Manuel Sauso, in Taos in 1828 when she was fifteen. They had three or possibly four children when they moved to Mora in 1836. Here she became enamored of Matthew Kinkead and moved in with him when her son, Andres, was born and it became known that he was the son of Kinkead. She moved to Pueblo with Kinkead in 1841 and helped him with his buffalo farm. Here she came upon Barclay who was a much more genteel man with a charming British accent. Also he was only 33 years old and Kinkead, fifteen years older, already was called the "old man."

Teresita and Barclay decided to live together and they set up a new home at Hardscrabble with their friends George Simpson and Joseph Doyle in 1844. This new settlement was about six miles down the Hardscrabble from Kinkead's ranch. Teresita's children, Juana, Cruzita, and Tomas Suaso, and her daughter Rafaela Kinkead, formed the growing family. George Simpson became interested in Juana who was 14, and they were married in November 30, 1842, in Pueblo without benefit of clergy since the nearest clergyman was in Taos. The first child, Isabella, was born in Hardscrabble in March 1844. She was probably the first white child born in the territory which later became Colorado. The friendly Indians came in droves to see the "little white papoose." Barclay had a store in Hardscrabble but he continued to take trips to trade with the Indians. Whether he was in partnership with Doyle at this time we are not certain, but we do know that the partnership was flourishing in 1848.

The trappers and traders had only minor troubles with the Indians before the Mexican War brought many newcomers west. The Utes were the most friendly. The newcomers, having only wild stories about the Indians told to them, would attack any Indians on sight even when the Indians approached with friendly signs. This attitude brought about a change which finally reulted in the Indians becoming very hostile. They were driven out of the area entirely some years later. Barclay had made many hunting trips alone to the Utes with only his mule and his goods on its back. While Barclay was hunting on the St. Charles, he learned from Levin Mitchell that Kearny and his troops had reached Bent's Fort on July 29, 1846. A month later the Mormons arrived in Pueblo and Kearny reached Santa Fe on August 18 without firing a shot. The war did not reach Hardscrabble with any impact, nor did it bother Pueblo except for the arrival of the Mormon Battalion families who were left there to spend the winter while the men marched south. But the Santa Fe trail became a busy highway with Bent's Fort the central staging station for the West.

Joseph B. Doyle

Joseph Bainbridge Doyle was born in Mt. Pleasant, Shenandoah County, Virginia, on July 10, 1817. The family moved to Belleville, Illinois, in the 1830s and by 1839 had moved to St. Louis. It was in that year that young Joe signed up with the Bents and immediately left for the fort on the Arkansas. Doyle worked on the wagon trains going from Bent's Fort to St. Louis and return. He made a trip to St. Louis in 1843 with John Hawkins, Levin Mitchell, Ben Ryder and William Tharp. In 1844 he left the Bents and joined Simpson and Barclay at Hardscrabble. Here he met Cruzita Suaso, Teresita's second daughter, aged thirteen. They decided to be married in Taos by Padre Martinez. In this year all three men went to Taos where Simpson and Juana were officially married at the same time as Cruzita and Doyle. Little Isabella Simpson was duly baptised. Barclay and Teresita were not on the trip and they never did get officially married; by this time she could have done so since her first husband, Manual Suaso, had died.

Finding that business at Hardscrabble was not flourishing because it was not on a main travelled route, and finding that the elevation did not permit them to grow vegetables without the danger of frost each spring to kill the new plants, Barclay and Doyle moved back to Pueblo and built houses about two miles from the Fort. Barclay records in his diary that he moved to "The Houses" in Pueblo on October 19, 1846, after having been building them for the past weeks of adobe. Doyle also had a house at the same place. In spite of doing well with the Indian trade by making trips to their villages Barclay and Doyle kept dreaming of better profits. They thought if they could locate on the main Santa Fe trail they would have more potential customers passing. The site they selected was near the junction of the Cimarron cut-off with the main trail south from Bent's Fort. This is at the site of the present town of Watrous, New Mexico. Barclay made a trip to Santa Fe and legally bought several hundred acres of the Scolly grant at the junction of the Mora and Sapello rivers. Here Barclay and Doyle spent some 28,000 dollars on a new fort which was large enough to have swallowed several forts the size of Fort Pueblo. They also had some assurance that if they built a fort here, the government might well purchase it. Thomas Fitzpatrick had written to Barclay on December 18, 1847: "Besides I know it to be the intention of the government to establish military posts at different points throughout the Indian country, amongst which some point on this river (the Mora) will be the most conspicuous."

The decision was made, the land in New Mexico was legally purchased, and preparations were made to move all their families and goods to the new site. The wagon train left Pueblo on Sunday, April 23, 1848. Janet Lecompte describes it as one of the largest wagon

trains ever to pass between Pueblo and Raton Pass. "There were eighteen armed men including Barclay, Simpson, William Adamson (Barclay's foreman), Maurice LeDuc, Tom Suaso and George Lewis, with their families and hired hands. The wagons were heavily loaded with household goods, corn, Indian goods left on hand, cats, chickens and an old six-pound mountain howitzer bought from William Bent and filled with cannister." The women were left temporarily in Mora, 25 miles away, and about the middle of May the train reached the new site where they began immediately to build Fort Barclay. It was a huge fort with forty rooms and offices in addition to stables. One week after arriving on the Mora, Barclay records that he planted a garden on May 17.

To keep the story short, the new venture began with high hopes, but these were eroded almost day by day with failures. The climate was more severe than along the Arkansas and the crops did not flourish as had been hoped. In 1850 Barclay offered the fort to the Army for 20,000 dollars but the offer was turned down. All hopes of such a sale vanished when the Army built Fort Union, six miles away, in 1851. Colonel Edwin Sumner, new military commander of New Mexico, ordered Barclay off the land. Barclay refused and argued that he had bought the land. The case went to court and the Army was ordered to pay Barclay 1,200 dollars a year rent for the part of Barclay's land which the army occupied. Several trading ventures failed, a toll bridge Barclay had just purchased was washed out, mules purchased for sale to emigrants were not in demand. By October 1853 Doyle resolved to return to the Arkansas.

Barclay and Teresita were not getting along well. While he was on a trading trip, Teresita moved to Mora. Upon his return an attempted reconciliation was unsuccessful. George Simpson was too much interested in drink and in other women. In the fall of 1848 Simpson had walked off with funds belonging to Barclay and Doyle. He went on a trip to St. Louis to visit his parents and refused to return to his family. His mother and Barclay finally persuaded him to return. But in 1850 he went to California with Robert Fisher where he stayed for two years, leaving Juana and the children to fend for themselves. Meanwhile, Juana, who probably did not know how to read when she was married, learned to read and write and started to teach children in Mora. She was supported in part by George's parents who wanted to bring the children to St. Louis, but did not prevail upon Juana to part with them, and by friends such as Barclay and Doyle.

When Barclay returned from an unfortunate trading expedition to Laramie in October 1853, Teresita was unbearable. Doyle took his family back to the Arkansas, and Barclay urged her to go with Doyle and Cruzita, which she did. Ads were placed in the Santa Fe papers for the sale of Fort Barclay but no buyers appeared. Barclay was left practically alone in his huge fort. He made a trip to St. Louis in 1855 and died in December, not long after his return to his

fort. Joseph Doyle, as the legal partner of Barclay, succeeded in getting the courts to recognize his claim to Fort Barclay in spite of some feeble efforts on the part of Barclay's brother in London to claim it. After some strange financial dealings Fort Barclay came permanently into the hands of William Kronig, a German immigrant who had married Rafaela, Teresita's youngest daughter (by Kinkead).

Joseph Doyle left Fort Barclay on October 15, 1853, with his wife Cruzita and their two children; with George Simpson, who left his wife at Mora to give birth in three weeks; with Teresita and her son, Tomas; with Maurice LeDuc and family; with Teresita's brother Jose Benito Sandoval and his family, and with quite a retinue. The destination was Fort Pueblo and the entire entourage moved into the fort. Sandoval was hired to repair the fort, but Doyle and his family built a house at the mouth of the St. Charles about six miles east in the spring of 1854. Not satisfied with the place, he moved on east in a few months to the mouth of the Huerfano where he had joined Dick Wootton who had recently built at this location. The settlement to the south of the St. Charles was taken over by Levin Mitchell and a large group of settlers. Both the houses at the mouth of the Huerfano were well fortified and included a blacksmith shop, kitchen and dining rooms and numerous sleeping rooms. These were intended to be permanent homes since the rumor was rife that the railroad would soon make these settlements important stations.

Few remained at fort

In the period from the time that Barclay and Doyle had left Pueblo in 1848 and the time that Doyle returned in 1854 most of the inhabitants left, either fightened by the Indians who had become more belligerent, or enticed by the gold in California. but a few remained, such as Archibald Metcalf, who bought "the houses" of Doyle and Barclay, and William Guerrier, Charles Kinney, Marcelino Baca. There were many emigrants who passed through Pueblo, some very large trains such as the one led by Captain Lewis Evans which had 126 men and forty wagons. Some came up the Arkansas to avoid the epidemic of cholera along the Missouri. In 1849 Seth Ward and William Guerrier took a load of 6,000 buffalo robes east from Pueblo. William Kronig described the fort as in a very good state of preservation in 1853.

Following the establishment of American government in New Mexico in 1846 the Ute Indians had proven to be one of the most accommodating tribes, causing the least trouble to the Americans. The Utes met with General Kearny and a little later with Colonel Doniphan. Both leaders threatened the Utes with retribution in case they should misbehave. This band of Utes lived in the San Luis Valley and in the Wet Mountain valley and ranged south of the

Arkansas and along the upper Purgatoire. The Americans promised to defend the Utes against their traditional enemies, the Arapahoes, Cheyennes and Kiowas. However, when these plains Indians raided the Utes, stealing their horses and grains, apparently with the connivance of the Americans, the Utes called for protection by the American troops. The Utes were ignored, no agent was sent to them, no gifts like those given to their enemies were offered, and they were not allowed to have guns. In November 1852 the Utes finally met with an Indian agent at Abiquiu. They were given a feast of mutton, beef, flour and trinkets. Chief Coniache said that the Utes were very pleased with the gifts but explained that the Utes were not an agricultural people. They needed guns and ammunition to defend themselves from other tribes and to hunt for food so that they could live according to the traditions of their people.

In September 1853 Chico Velasquez, a Muache Ute chief, went to see Governor Meriwether, recently appointed governor of New Mexico, who was definitely unfriendly to the Utes. Even so, the chief agreed to keep the peace even when the governor did not give them the food which he had promised.

The Utes enjoyed trading with the whites, but when the whites began to build settlements on their land, they warned the whites to leave. On October 16, 1854, at Chico Creek, six miles east of Pueblo, Charles Autobees was taking some flour and corn from his new ranch on the Huerfano to trade in the north when he was accosted by Chief Coniache and 27 warriors. The Utes told Autobees that he would not be molested if he surrendered the Arapahoe women and children in his party. Autobees and the four men with him refused and a two and a half hour battle ensued in which Autobees was wounded and four of his animals were stolen.

In the same month a Ute was murdered in cold blood by a Mexican. Chief Chico Velasquez asked for justice from the governor. Meriwether offered one hundred dollars reward for the return of the murderer, who was soon found. The governor sent the murderer to Santa Fe for trial. He gave each chief a gray cloth coat with brass buttons and red and yellow braid. The chiefs were very much pleased. However, the Mexican was taken to Taos to jail and was allowed to escape. So much for American justice in the eyes of the Utes. Furthermore, the chiefs who wore the gift coats all came down with smallpox and died. The Utes believed that the infections were intentional and went on the warpath. One goal appeared to be to eliminate every white settlemen on the upper Arkansas.

A few days before Christmas 1854 Dick Wootton had taken a small hunting party to the Wet Mountains. He returned home to the mouth of the Huerfano early because he was concerned about signs of Indians and herds of horses. On the way he stopped at Fort Pueblo, which was in charge of Benito Sandoval, and cautioned the residents not to admit any Indians to the fort.

The massacre

On the morning of December 24, Tierra Blanca, one of the embittered and dangerous Ute chiefs, appeared before the fort with about one hundred warriors. They had just come from the placita of Marcelino Baca across the fountain to the east at a site later occupied by the brewery. Baca, who had a Pawnee wife and three small children, was reinforced only by old Jose Barela, the ninety-year-old uncle of Benito Sandoval. The two men came outside the doors with rifles aimed at Tierra Blanca. They could see the Utes had stolen his entire herd of horses and the chief was mounted on Baca's favorite white stallion, leaving Baca a poor man. Baca threatened they would shoot if the chief came any closer. Tierra Blanca retreated and rode off toward the fort with his warriors.

Barela took a horse from the corral and rode down the Arkansas to warn the settlers at the mouth of the St. Charles and at the Huerfano settlement. It was not possible to reach the fort. Baca and eleven women and children heard shouting and shots from the direction of the fort and then silence. After Barela returned several hours later, Baca went with him to the fort to investigate.

Even before they crossed the Fountain they found the body of Jose Ignacio Valencia, whose wife was at Baca's. As they crossed the Fountain they accosted Juan Rafael Medina staggering toward them with his belly slashed open. He asked for a drink of water and after drinking, he died. At the gate of the fort they found the body of Guadalupe Vigil with an arrow in his back. He probably had been trying to get to Baca's house. Near the gate sat Rumaldo Cordova, alive and conscious. He could not talk because he had been shot through the mouth, but using signs he told Baca that there were no survivors. Inside the fort were found the bodies of Francisco Mestas, Juan Blas Martin and Manuel Lucero. In a far room was the body of Benito Sandoval. After he had been shot Benito picked up his gun and his seven-year-old son, Juan Isidro, and locked himself inside the bastion. The Utes broke through the roof and killed him but not before he had killed two Indians. The bodies of Juan Aragon and Estanislado de Luna were never found. There were five or six Indian bodies scattered in the fort. Since the Mexicans had only four guns among them, they fought very well.

The Utes moved off toward the Wet Mountains with three captives: Chepita Miera, the young wife of Juan Blas Martin, and the two sons of Benito Sandoval: Juan Isidro, aged seven, and Felix, aged twelve. Their camp that night was attacked by their traditional enemies, the Arapahoes, and they lost most of their booty. The next day Chepita was shot with an arrow as she was bathing in a stream.

Twelve-year-old Felix was released eight months later to his cousin, Joseph Doyle, at Abiquiu and told his story about the massacre. Tierra Blanca had ridden up to the fort and asked to come in. The doors were at first closed but then one of the Mexicans

remarked that Tierra Blanca was a friend and they were permitted to enter. Seven-year-old Juan Isidro was bought by a Mexican trader at Canyon de Chelly after five years and ten months as a slave of the Navajos who had bought him from the Utes.

These events at Fort Pueblo did not end the depredations of the Utes. On December 27 they killed Marcelino Baca's brother Benito and two recently arrived Americans only two miles down the Arkansas from Baca's home. Near the St. Charles village the Utes stole forty head of cattle belonging to Levin Mitchell. One herder was killed and a second escaped with an arrow in his back. After these awesome events the residents planned to move farther down the Arkansas.

Before they left, the Utes under Tierra Blanca and some Apache allies under Chief Guero attacked the Huerfano village on January 19, 1855. Joseph Doyle was still away on a trading trip but his wife and family and the other inhabitants of the village had moved to Dick Wootton's fortified house. When the Utes rode past, many rifles rang out from the rooftop and a dozen armed men rode out the gates, firing. The Utes were so taken by surprise that they fled.

A military expedition against the Utes was organized in February, the most effective army being the 500 men under Lieutenant Colonel Ceran St. Vrain. The army pursued the Indians so closely that the Utes did not even have an opportunity to hunt for food. By September 1855 a treaty was concluded to end this conflict.

In the spring of 1855 Joseph Doyle, Ben Ryder, Levin Mitchell and most of the others took their families to New Mexico for safety. Wootton took his wife and employees to Fort Pueblo and stayed a few months until Dolores Wootton gave birth to her fourth child and expired. Wootton took his children to their grandparents in Taos and went to Barclay's Fort. He spent his time freighting goods along with Doyle, Simpson, Tom Suaso and others. Autobees stayed on at his ranch two miles up the Huerfano. As far as we know the fort was never again occupied by any but travelers passing through.

Joseph Doyle settled on a ranch sixteen miles up the Huerfano in 1856. He built the Casa Blanca, the first clapboard house in this region, as his home. He had a flour mill, a blacksmith shop and a group of houses for his workers. His money came from freighting for the government and from selling his products in Pueblo, Denver, Canon City, Tarryall. By 1861 he had over 600 acres under irrigation. He had cattle and sheep. In the months of October, November and December 1859 he grossed $40,000 in business. He supplied Fort Garland and Fort Union. In 1864 he was elected a member of the Territorial Legislature and went to Denver to serve. He died in Denver on March 4, 1864, and was buried on his ranch on the Huerfano. His wife Cruzita died at the ranch on March 1, 1865, the evening before she was to have married Dick Wootton. They were survived by three of their six children: James Quinn Doyle, Mrs. Fanny Berry and Mrs. Florence Richards. It is said that he left an estate

of over 100,000 dollars. Doyle was known for his generosity and his kindness even to his competitors. His mother-in-law, Teresita, lived on the Doyle ranch until her death in 1894.

George Simpson and his family were at the Doyle ranch until 1866 when he moved to Trinidad where he had a farm about three miles down the Purgatoire. Juana bore him ten children who were born in Hardscrabble, Barclay's Fort, Mora and the Doyle ranch. George was a small man who wore a full beard in his later years. He was a dreamer, a romantic, undisciplined. From Trinidad he wrote poetry and articles for the Trinidad and Pueblo papers, sometimes under a pseudonym 'Senex'. He died in Trinidad on September 7, 1885, and was buried on a cliff above the town, still known as Simpson's Rest. After his death Juana at some time moved to California where she died in 1916 at the age of 88.

Permanent settlers came to the site of Baca's ranch across the Fountain in 1858. Pueblo attracted settlers near the abandoned fort in 1859. With the fear of Indian attack dissipated the new structures no longer needed to be built as forts.

The White House on the Doyle Ranch, first clapboard house in this region.

Crossing the Arkansas

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These are some of the most interesting records of Fort Pueblo and the Santa Fe Trail. The list of published works on the subject is almost inexhaustible. New material continues to come to light forming sources for new interpretations of history.

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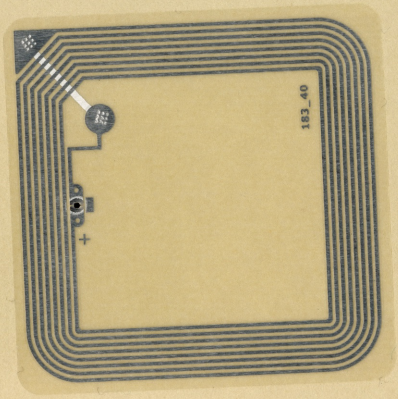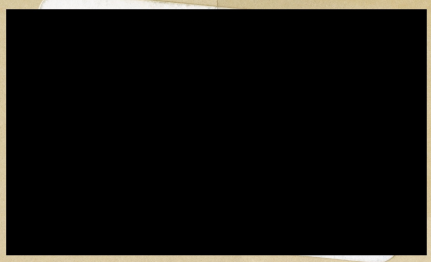
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